

# **Ancient History**

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J151**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **J051**

## **Examiners' Reports**

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**June 2011**

**J151/J051/R/11**

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Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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## **Chief Examiner's Report**

This summer's session marked a distinct increase in the candidature for the examination as a whole, with almost equal numbers in all units. As in last year's examination, there was a strong sense that candidates had enjoyed what they had studied, and that many had benefited greatly from their enquiries into the Ancient world. In all units there was evidence of high quality work, and a real sense that the students had engaged with the problems of studying the material required for the specification.

The papers worked well, with candidates approaching them in a steady and appropriate manner. A cautionary note, however, should be sounded on a couple of difficulties which are restricting candidates from gaining the highest marks. In the second question on each option, it is essential that the candidates respond to the passage printed on the paper. These questions take the format, effectively, of asking what is happening in the passage, then asking the candidate to explain its historical significance, before finally asking whether we can believe what is written in the passage on the paper. In short, one might summarise it as (a) what is happening? (b) why was it important and (c) do you think that it really happened as it is described? The error that a number of students seemed to have fallen into is writing a general answer about the particular author, or, in the worst cases, simply writing about something which they know is mentioned somewhere by that author, rather than using the material printed on the paper.

Another area for general concern was the second passage question: candidates were often picking up on details in the passage, but they must ensure that they spend some time carefully thinking about what is given in the passage, so that they can give a comprehensive answer to the question set. They should also be reminded that for the highest marks they need to consider whether what they are being told by the passage is historically accurate or reliable in the context of the question.

The essay questions were generally well answered, with many detailed accounts. Once again, though, it should be noted that the best answers respond fully to the question given, and are not just prepared answers on the particular topic.

The Controlled Assessment titles led to a considerable number of excellent responses, and it was a great pleasure to see such a wide range of answers on the different topics. Here again, though, it is essential to remind teachers and students that the key to a successful answer is looking at the ancient evidence – candidates should look for items or texts from the ancient world and then use these to help them construct an answer. There is no right or wrong answer, on one level, to these questions – what is being looked for is an intelligent selection of material, which is then considered carefully and placed in its historical context. Candidates should be encouraged to think about what they can learn from the evidence as they look at it and consider it for themselves.

There were significantly fewer infringements of the rubric in this year's exams. There were still a very few candidates who attempted answer the wrong option, but it was clear that the vast majority understood exactly what they needed to do to complete the paper to the best of their ability. A more insidious problem remains the issue of time management, particularly for the earlier questions: candidates who answered the first two questions at excessive length often made the final stages of the paper much more frantic.

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Presentation of work in some cases proved challenging for examiners: this was not a significant problem except in very few cases. It is very helpful to leave extra space between questions, in case candidates wish at some point to return to their answer. Some candidates whose handwriting was particularly challenging make matters more straightforward for the examiners by double spacing their work. As last year, a very few candidates got the wrong numbers with questions or left out question numbers altogether; this is not helpful for the examiners.

Whilst numbers have grown this year, there were a considerable number of candidates who have not certificated – hence the differences between the outcomes at the unit level and the over-all certifications for the short and full courses.

## **A031 The Greeks at war**

In this second year of the new specification, it is clear that teachers are offering appropriate guidance to candidates for the exam, and that candidates are responding well to the challenges of this paper. In this summer's exam, examiners noted a full range of responses across both options, with many excellent and thorough scripts. This year Option 2 (Alexander the Great) proved significantly more popular, but candidates seemed well-prepared for the format of the paper whichever option they attempted.

Most candidates were able to complete the paper in the time allowed without significant problems, though there were a number of shorter responses to the essay question. Some candidates put themselves under considerable pressure by devoting too much time to the first two questions of the option, which are designed to elicit a relatively concise response. The vast majority of candidates worked through their chosen option in question order, though there were some who chose to deal first with the lengthier questions (the second passage question and the essay), perhaps because in preparation they had encountered problems with excessive length with the earlier questions. However such an approach, while it can work effectively for some, is not one examiners would recommend for the majority of candidates, as the paper is designed to step candidates through increasing levels of demand as they work through questions in order. The first question is intended to provide a straightforward opening, and examiners were prepared to accept a wide range of responses; to achieve full marks; at least one of these needs to be supported with some relevant detail. The second question in each option is focused on a passage from one of the sources, and the three sub-questions each relate to a single Assessment Objective. Most candidates were able to deal effectively with the (a) and (b) questions, and use the passage to good effect. However the (c) question proved more challenging as many candidates produced a very general response which did not make use of the specific passage set in the question; this restricted the marks available. There were some candidates who answered these questions at excessive length, which, in some cases, resulted in time pressure towards the end of the exam. It may be that some candidates would benefit from more practice at exercises of this sort, which can be undertaken very early in the course, as the answers focus on a single Assessment Objective.

The third question in each option presented in many ways the greatest challenge for candidates, and proved a good differentiator. Practice for this type of question is better left until the later stages of the course, when candidates are more comfortable responding to the three Assessment Objectives. A significant number of candidates treated the (a) and (b) questions as if they were marked in different ways, but both of these sub-questions are marked across all three Assessment Objectives, though with a different balance of marks. Where an answer to an (a) question did not include any evaluation of the source, the range of marks was necessarily limited. There is a difference between the (a) and (b) sub-questions, as the (a) question is focused closely on the passage, while the (b) question requires an answer using both the passage and also a wider range of source material. There were a number of excellent responses to this question as a whole, but there were also some relatively short responses which could not be fully rewarded across the three Assessment Objectives. Somewhat weaker responses restricted themselves almost entirely to the passages printed on the paper, rather than drawing on a wide range of material.

Because evaluation is a common element to both these sub-questions and also to the essay, candidates may need to repeat some elements of their evaluation. The best answers made this relevant to the question that they were answering, rather than producing a paragraph of general evaluation not directly related to the question. Weaker responses that relied heavily on pre-prepared paragraphs of general comments at least ensured that all three Assessment Objectives were addressed.

The essay questions in Section B for each option gave the candidates much greater opportunity to show what they had learnt while studying the course. The best answers were well structured and incorporated a wide range of material in response to the question, demonstrating a good grasp of the source material and also all the chronology of the period. Weaker responses were often less convincing in their grasp of chronology, and references to sources could be vague and prone to error; however in many cases candidates were able to convey their interest and enthusiasm for the material they had studied. It is worth reminding candidates that the bullet points do not constitute an essay plan as such, and an essay written following the bullet points as laid out is likely to read rather awkwardly. The best responses were written very fluently and communicated a high degree of engagement and understanding.

The examiners were encouraged by the standard of work across both options and the paper as a whole, and think that this reflects great credit both on the candidates themselves and all those who are teaching this new specification.

## **Comments on individual questions**

### **Section A**

Q. 1 It became clear that some candidates had interpreted this question to refer to the immediate aftermath of the battle of Marathon rather than to the campaign after the return of the Persian forces back to Asia Minor. In the event, both approaches, or a combination of them, received credit from examiners. To secure full marks, at least one of the reasons had to be supported with some specific detail.

Q. 2(a) The majority of candidates made excellent use of the passage to secure high marks. There were a few over lengthy answers.

Q. 2(b) Most candidates were able to identify aspects of Xerxes' character from the passage and respond accordingly, though a few used colourful (if appropriate) language to describe them.

Q. 2(c) This question proved a little more challenging. Some candidates allowed their answer to become very general, and failed to make any specific reference to the passage, though there were also some excellent responses. Candidates are reminded of the importance of commenting on relevant details from the passage, and considering their reliability. This is not a question of a particular answer, but of their considering these details and coming to a reasoned conclusion about them.

Q. 3(a) The best answers made good use of the detail in the passage itself, and were careful to address the three Assessment Objectives. Some weaker responses made little attempt to address AO3. Most were able to address the confusion of the battle as revealed in the passage, but there were a small number of narrative accounts of the Persian campaign which failed to use the passage to any significant extent. It is worth noting that the question does not invite candidates to go beyond the passage itself.

Q. 3(b) Weaker responses made general references to Herodotus and did not use the passage to any significant degree. The best answers drew on a wide range of material from Herodotus, while incorporating telling details from the passage itself. There were some interestingly different views of Herodotus' confession of uncertainty ("I cannot say..."), with some candidates taking him to task for incorporating stories, while others commended his judicious admission of doubt.

Q. 4 This proved the more popular of the two essays. The best responses showed an excellent understanding of the nature of the two armies, and were able to contrast the Greek hoplites with the more varied weaponry used by the Persian forces. Some candidates argued well that the Greek hoplites were significantly stronger than the opposition set against them, though there

were also a significant number who disagreed and felt the responsibility for the defeat of the Persians lay more with individual commanders such as Xerxes and Mardonius. In general candidates were happier discussing what happened at Thermopylae, and there were some very unclear accounts of the battle of Plataea.

Q. 5 This question proved less popular. However the very best answers showed good engagement with the details of Themistocles' involvement in the Greek campaign, though some were unaware of his significant involvement in the building up of the Athenian fleet in the years before the invasion. Most were able to give a good account of what happened at Salamis, though some responses inclined too heavily to a narrative response. Only the best answers were able to make effective comparisons with a number of other individuals, such as Leonidas or Pausanias. Some candidates felt that Herodotus showed excessive partiality towards Themistocles because of the bias of his Athenian sources, while others felt his Athenian sources gave a negative account of Themistocles' involvement.

## **Section B**

Q. 6 Most candidates were able to suggest appropriate reasons and support them with examples from Alexander's life. There were a very few excessively lengthy answers to this question. Some candidates offered essentially the same reason repackaged into different forms.

Q. 7(a) Most candidates dealt effectively with the passage and were able to discuss the difficulties posed by the fast flowing river and by the Persian forces massed on the upper bank preventing the Macedonian soldiers from leaving the river. Many were also struck by the hand to hand nature of the combat ("Horse struggled with horse and man with man").

Q. 7(b). The majority of candidates were able to draw appropriate elements out of the passage, such as the discipline and organisation of the Macedonian forces and the primary role of Alexander himself.

Q. 7(c) A significant number of responses to this question were very general in nature, and made no use of specific detail drawn from the passage itself. The best answers were able to relate Arrian's own military background and approach to history to details in this particular passage, and thereby produce a reasoned response.

Q. 8(a) The majority of candidates were very clear about the context of this passage, and there were some excellent responses. Relatively few candidates discussed the relationship between the Macedonian king and his subordinates, which was traditionally somewhat informal and rough, and there was surprisingly little comment on the drinking bouts which feature in the sources. One examiner commented that some of the discussions in response to this question reflected the Oliver Stone film rather than the original sources.

Q. 8(b) The purpose of this question is to broaden the discussion. There were some excellent responses that started with the incident in the passage, and then looked forwards and backwards in Alexander's life for other significant moments which reflected his character. There were some discussions of the significance of alcohol in his life. The very best answers demonstrated a clear grasp of what was covered by Arrian and Plutarch, together with a clear understanding of the source material they were using. A few candidates restricted their selection to a couple of incidents from Alexander's childhood (eg his encounter with the Persian ambassadors).

Q. 9 This proved the more popular of the two essay questions. The best responses demonstrated a clear grasp of the chronology of Alexander's campaigns, and were able to chart the changing response of his army as the campaign lengthened. Most candidates were able to show the close connection between the King and his army both in his early battles and at the

end of his life, but a substantial number were less clear about those occasions when the army failed to follow his lead. Some answers focused more on Alexander's companions than on the army at large, and examiners were able to credit this. A number of candidates use Greek and Macedonian as interchangeable terms, which is confusing in the context of this subject.

Q. 10 There were some weaker answers that often very generalised accounts of Alexander and his life, but most were able to discuss his relationship with his mother and also with divine figures. There were some interesting discussions of his visit to the Oracle of Ammon, and many candidates were able to put in context is attempts to introduce Persian customs such as obeisance. Relatively few touched on the issue of divine honours in Greece itself.

## A032 The rise of Rome

The entry was evenly balanced across both the early Rome and Hannibal options and generally the standard was very good with many candidates showing evidence of excellent teaching, commendable scholarship and sound examination technique. What was particularly impressive was the in-depth knowledge that many candidates displayed in reference to and evaluation of the original sources.

There are areas which could improve performance: it was noticeable that some candidates gave overlong answers on the early questions which undermined the care and focus that could be given toward the higher-scoring later questions. Timing is a key element of successful examination technique. It is advised that in the second and third questions where clear direction is given to refer to details in the passages, candidates need to do this – too often potentially good explanations were undermined by this omission. Closely related to this is the need to focus on the specific needs of the question: too often prefixes such as 'how far' and 'how useful' were ignored and answers became fairly generalised responses. This is also germane when looking at the essay titles – palpably, candidates that addressed the question in their answers gave themselves a better chance of attaining the higher mark levels. Finally there were a some simple errors that need to be ironed out – despite some very impressive knowledge and use of the original evidence, a surprising number of candidates were confused about the exact dates of the lives of the ancient writers – Polybius would not have been alive when Hannibal crossed the Alps whilst Livy and Virgil were roughly contemporaneous with the Augustan period and Plutarch was writing in the later first century AD.

- 1 Generally candidates were able to answer this question well: stronger responses could explain convincingly the links with Troy/Venus (the religious significance of this); the relationship with the Latins; the foundations of Lavinium and Alba Longa which eventually led to the foundation of Rome and other relevant points.

The main error seemed to be that Aeneas founded Rome or that he founded the city where Romulus and Remus were born; most knew he was Trojan, though did little explaining why that was important; there were important spelling mistakes here – Latinus, Lavinium, Rutulians and sometimes even Aeneas.

- 2a When outlining the events in the passage, most candidates could retell the events in the passage in terms of a dispute, building of temples, omens taken and death. Some went beyond the passage to tell the whole story; details omitted were usually the number of vultures and where the fight took place.

When discussing the importance in the development of Rome, the significance of the omens and their later religious significance was least well explained; a number suggested that Rome would have been called differently (Reme?) if Romulus had lost; many explained the character of the Romans was violent as a result; very few mentioned that Romulus was good for Rome.

Some candidates chose to answer the two elements of this question separately, whilst others produced a single answer. Both approaches were valid, and credited equally by examiners.

- 2b There were some mixed answers to this question: there were some rather generalised responses in which candidates referred to the Preface where Livy's attitude was described as one of not caring if it is true or not but simply an interest in showing Rome as 'great'!

Stronger answers identified specific points of the passage and related these to the question – ie a number suggested that there are two versions of Remus' death (though some said Livy did not mention Romulus' actions in order to make Romulus look better); that Livy wrote 700 years later without any sources to work with, and that the whole story sounds unreliable (6 and 12 vultures too perfect to believe!).

Here again it is essential for the highest marks that candidates refer to details in the passage, and use them to create a reasoned evaluation of what is said in response to the question.

- 3a Candidates either gave a detailed summary of the passage or picked one or two elements to analyse. Of the latter, most identified the specific references to Romulus and were able to develop these descriptions: most did not mention Tullus/Ancus and were unable to exploit the comparison that Virgil makes here; a few related what the passage said to what Livy says Romulus did.

Normally brief reference was made to Virgil and Augustus with some erroneously suggesting that Augustus paid Virgil to write; better answers mentioned propaganda by Augustus and how this story reflected upon his reign; best answers accepted that as poetry it was not very historically accurate. There were some good, knowledgeable efforts with this challenging passage.

- 3b The 'how useful' focus of the question was not always addressed. Romulus' importance was used by most with varying degrees of detail and a number could then develop them to explain how important they were: the strongest answers were able to build on previous answers and use references in the Virgil text to develop arguments about the importance of religion and strong defence. Similarly, these responses were then able to integrate some detail from Livy into this – foreign policy (Sabines), laws, political system.

Much of what had been said in earlier questions about Livy and Virgil as evidence was repeated – arguments that Livy's aim was to raise morals (candidates often misspelled this as 'morales') after the decline of the civil war period, but he did not do research, just copied others, and wanted to find good and bad examples to teach Romans how to act. There was also some good discussion of the *Aeneid* as Augustan propaganda. Most understood that Livy is more 'precise' than Virgil.

- 4 The guidelines for the question asked for two detailed episodes between Aeneas' arrival and the foundation of Rome. Some candidates coped very well with this but the instruction was hard for some, occasionally this meant two episodes about Romulus and Remus. In addition, the focus on **origins** was not really noticed by some candidates so that the rape of Lucretia figured as an event. Where a candidate had some factual detail of two events they were able to make judgements about the relative credibility of the details given by Livy. Very few could identify the precise references in Livy.

There were standard statements about Livy's aims and the times he was writing in without really showing a good understanding of the situation. The stronger responses made good points along the lines that the accounts (including Virgil) give us an idea of the way Romans felt about their history, and what we have is a history of their views not necessarily 'historical' events.

- 5 A key differentiator in the quality of candidates' responses to this question was the level of detailed knowledge of the reigns of the kings – at best there was accurate recall of the details of Livy's account, whilst at the other end of the spectrum candidates produced confused versions of the two reigns. Many answers displayed good detail on both reigns: with Numa – the temple to Janus (often misnamed as to Jupiter) and religious aspects, the calendar, his suspicious meetings in the woods with his mistress/wife/spirit were mentioned: Tullus – non-religious, warlike and vicious with conflict against the Albans and Mettius' fate prominent.

Answers at the highest level moved beyond narrative and addressed the statement in the question. In discussing the difference in the impact each king made, the candidates produced effectively supported judgements.

In many cases it was easier for candidates to refer to Livy which many did with accuracy and conviction: occasionally, some also picked upon the reference to Tullus in Virgil. Very good answers were able to make some evaluation of the distinction between the accuracy of Livy on the reigns – seeing Tullus as more credible with Numa being portrayed as the comparison/contrast with Romulus .

- 6 This question was generally answered well and a number of points were made – Hannibal's hatred of Rome/oath sworn for father was the main reason; revenge for/aftermath of a defeat (not always identified although stronger candidates did suggest the First Punic War; trade was a reason with some focus on Sicily and/or Spain; power and wanting an empire with varying degrees of precise development.
- 7a With regard to Hannibal's actions, many candidates seemed unable to simply repeat details from the passage but would try to expand upon the event. Few mentioned the 'calling together' specifically, that he made a speech was often implied; what he said was usually pointing out Rome (a significant number omitted the reference to Gauls). As a leader he was generally determined and a risk-taker. Most saw that he realised they were demoralised; that he had some idea what to do and say; he knew how to inspire them; not all followed this with what the effect was. The strongest answers referred to all of the above and then completed the point that he was a good leader because his men followed him – 'endured their trials stoically'.

Some candidates chose to answer the two elements of this question separately, whilst others produced a single answer. Both approaches were valid, and credited equally by examiners.

- 7b The question gives strong guidance at the outset to refer to the passage: a number of answers were generalized views of Polybius with little relevance to and little detail from the passage. Some suggested that Polybius had spoken to witnesses of this journey – this may well be a factor for later events (such as Zama), but is unlikely in this precise circumstance given a date of birth c.200 BC. Other generalisations revolved around his methods of research which could have been relevant and plausible if tied to details from the passage.

- 8a Similarly to question 7b) where candidates are asked to refer to the given text, there was an unwillingness simply to identify the tactics from the passage before leaping into an account of what happened after or before the passage. There are a number of very clear points that could be identified from the passage (and rewarded) if students had done so. Not all identified the issue of manpower and resources which is in the passage.

The 'how far' focus of the question was ignored by a number which resulted in a '*this passage tells us*' approach without any evaluation. Everyone, however, did point out that the Romans thought he was a coward. Some candidates felt the same, not really aware of what his aim was and why he was doing it. Evaluation of Plutarch was fairly generalised.

- 8b The 'how much' focus of the question was not generally addressed. Stronger answers were able to use the basis of the Plutarch passage, suggest that this was quite good for an understanding of the Fabian tactics but limited, and so move into Polybius and Livy giving some wider reasons – not besieging Rome, the Carthaginian focus on 'non-stop warfare', exhaustion. The question focused on Italy which a number of candidates interpreted as everything in Italy going back to the passage through the Alps onwards or ignored as they moved fairly quickly on to discussions of Scipio and Zama.

Discussion of sources was again variable: there was some excellent evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the literary evidence but also some real weaknesses as well – Plutarch was confused with Polybius at times and on occasion thought to precede Livy as a writer; but he was more reliable because he did research. Occasionally a candidate argued that the sources do not give much information on this – but he did have problems of supply, resources, manpower and lack of allies.

- 9 Of those taking this option, this was the most popular question: evidently the question was asking candidates to make a judgement on Carthaginian defeat across a range of factors but with only one stated factor. Opinions were divided; for some it was clearly the root cause of failure because if he had captured Rome he would not have lost at Zama. Some candidates discussed the failure to capture Rome in terms of a single factor among many but a number just saw it as directly responsible. Better answers looked at factors beyond this for some view on the causes of failure – here candidates examined whether Hannibal really could have captured Rome successfully given the problems with material and supply. There was good knowledge shown on Scipio and Zama but again for highest reward this needed to be contrasted with other factors so a relative judgement could be made.

References to all authors were used by stronger candidates for factors; a few quoted Livy, but most knew what Maharbal had said; very few used the relevant Polybius passages on Hannibal's view and aims. Evaluation of authors tended to be general, and at times confused. rarely were specific selections evaluated. Many argued quite effectively that Polybius was the most reliable because he was nearer the times when writing and his use of witnesses (particularly Laelius and Masinissa).

- 10 Fewer candidates attempted this question: few followed the guidelines and showed the strengths and weaknesses of each side at the start and end. They generally did not have the information to judge the strengths at the end. The terms of peace were rarely mentioned. There was very little reference to sources other than general accounts of their reliability.

## A033 Women in ancient politics

The candidature on this paper rose considerably from last year. It was apparent that the quality of some answers on this paper was higher than that in the other units, with candidates clearly benefiting from the extra year of studying ancient history. The analysis of the sources was more precise, and the quality of the arguments advanced more sophisticated. Both options were answered well, and it was apparent that many candidates had engaged with the issues surrounding these two women with enthusiasm. As in the other two units, however, we would urge candidates to look at the detail of the passages printed on the page, and to apply their evaluation of the source to consider the reliability of the information which they are drawing from the passages.

### Option 1: Cleopatra

#### Question 1

Many candidates responded well to the question, but often there was a lack of further information. For example, some would write Cleopatra was Queen of Egypt without any additional information. For the higher marks candidates are reminded of the need to expand on basic information to give a full answer. Some candidates seemed uncertain about what was meant by 'politically' important, but relevant information which they gave was credited.

#### Question 2(a)

Although many candidates recognised the basic fact that Cleopatra was fleeing at this point, many – frequently those who performed well in the rest of the paper – seemed unwilling to go through the passage with attention to the details in it, and select relevant key points.

#### Question 2(b)

The majority of candidates showed that they had understood that Cleopatra fled because she was losing, but many did not explain the situation thoroughly. Also, some candidates took the question to mean 'act as they did' in going to war at Actium, which was duly rewarded. Other candidates pointed out that Mark Antony was not mentioned in the passage, so they could not account for his actions.

#### Question 2(c)

Many candidates produced generic evaluations along the lines that Propertius was a poet and therefore the passage is not accurate: such answers often failed to give appropriate references to the details in the passage. A good number also pointed out that the presence of the gods seemed a little unrealistic and unlikely. The more astute candidates also noted that some of the material in the poem – such as Cleopatra's flight – could be said to be correct. Candidates should be reminded, as in the other papers, that to access the higher marks they must refer to details in the passage, as the question demands.

**Question 3(a):**

The interpretation of the passage was well done by those who stuck to the details in it. As in question 2, candidates are reminded of the importance of using the passage given to them on the paper. A number did not evaluate the passage in any detail, and there were a fair number of generic evaluations. For some candidates it might be helpful to start an answer by repeating the words in the question, along the lines of 'It helps us in this way...' followed by an example. Candidates on the whole were better at AO1 and AO3 than AO2 in this answer, or just repeated the same point about her manipulation throughout.

**Question 3(b):**

Some answers branched off onto the way Cleopatra was a problem for Antony with detailed information about the ways she interfered with his political/military life. Such answers were good on how typical the behaviour was, but not so thorough on how typical the account was. They did not have problem with 'political leaders' as a term – they seemed to know Caesar, Antony and Octavian were meant; only a rare one mentioned Ptolemy. Most kept to some extent to the passage even if only as a starting point. Many candidates were not good at understanding typicality in terms of the sources' portrayal of Cleopatra. They gave some good AO1 details on her behavior and some examples from sources, but were not as good at evaluating typical presentations using their examples.

**Question 4:**

Candidates seemed to engage easily with the idea of Cleopatra being 'destructive'; many had plenty say about how Cleopatra destroyed Antony, which led them to some slightly unbalanced answers where nothing good that she did was then mentioned. A few outlined her good rule of Egypt and how she expanded the territories; Caesarion was mentioned occasionally. Some answers considered 'doomed' and felt this was a bit 'over the top' by Horace. The standard information about Horace being Augustan and under the patronage of Maecenas was generally mentioned (with the conclusion that he was likely to be biased). This idea of bias, however, was not really developed any further – it would be helpful for candidates to think about why this might be the case, and what effects it might have on our reading of Horace's account. The fuller context of the quote was not normally explained. There was some good interpretation of events and sources for the most part. Many candidates were able to gain marks under AO1 with examples of Cleopatra's character and political actions, whilst also drawing relevant conclusions from their knowledge of the sources to gain marks under AO3; on the other hand, they were not as good at showing AO2 understanding of how far these examples backed up Horace's idea or not. The AO2 mark is dependent on showing understanding of the historical context, and perhaps something which candidates may need to focus on more carefully in their preparation.

**Question 5:**

This question proved the more popular of the two essays. Many candidates followed the line of argument that Actium was important because it led to Cleopatra's death. Once that was said, weaker answers gave a description of the battle and its aftermath. Many candidates described the Battle of Actium and its significance, and did not analyse the significance of other events in comparison in enough detail. There were, however, some excellent answers which showed knowledge of other elements of Cleopatra's life – such as her involvement with Julius Caesar and the birth of Caesarion or her rule in Egypt. Such answers showed a well balanced and response to the issues raised in the question.

## **Option 2: Agrippina**

### **Question 6:**

Candidates are reminded, as in option 1, that they need to give adequate detail to gain the higher marks. Many stated that Agrippina appointed Burrus and Seneca and that she was therefore able to control Nero, without giving any details of the significance of these two individuals; others stated that she controlled Nero through incest or through her position as Nero's mother. It is worth reminding candidates of the idea of being thorough if they wish to gain 5 marks.

### **Question 7(a):**

This question was done very well by the majority of candidates and many picked out all the relevant points from the passage.

### **Question 7(b):**

Nearly everyone chose the 'criticising' sentence but some found explaining what that meant in terms of what Agrippina did less easy. Some were vague – Agrippina was violent so Nero became afraid; Nero grew older and was less inclined to be told what to do – without some sort of interpretation in terms of the passage. Many candidates were able to pick out one reason from the passage, but were often not as good at showing understanding of the historical context to explain why Nero turned against Agrippina.

### **Question 7(c):**

A substantial number of candidates just offered generic evaluation of Suetonius without detailed reference to the passage, but at times some answers really did get to grips with the details in the passage effectively. Many candidates failed to focus on the attitude part of the question.

### **Question 8(a):**

There was no problem identifying how Agrippina influenced Claudius – attractions, visits, affections, and that he was weak. There were some who went beyond this and discussed how she influenced freedmen and later events in a narrative which was unrelated to the passage. There was quite a lot of interpretation of what was meant by the various elements in the passage; a considerable number of candidates discussed her aim with Octavia and how this showed influence also. Some candidates forgot to include evaluation of sources, even if they interpreted what the passage said and gave a personal response.

### **Question 8(b):**

A number of candidates took this question as chance to explain Agrippina's behaviour at length with very little reference to the sources other than a final paragraph on generic evaluation. Position and power got somewhat ignored, and a number of candidates failed to outline what her position was. Often such responses also failed to make adequate use of the source evidence available. General discussions of Tacitus and Suetonius and their dislike of women (in politics) featured largely. There were some good discussion of this nature, but it was not always related to the specific question. There were not enough examples from the sources, but candidates

were better at evaluating the sources and how they might portray Agrippina in a negative light in terms of her power over Nero.

**Question 9:**

The majority of candidates seemed to feel that Agrippina was bad, with narratives of her bad ways predominating – these took the form of rather general accounts of what the sources say. Weaker answers did not have the detail to support their view, so that her actions were clearly not developed, and simply assumed to have bad results. Not as many candidates attempted this question, and many who did attempt it were not good at comparing the 'good' and 'bad' things she did in Roman politics to come to a conclusion, many just gave a narrative of all the bad things she did and how the sources are biased against her, or just gave a narrative of her life from Claudius until her death without stating explicitly which events/actions they thought were bad/good and why.

**Question 10:**

There were more balanced answers here. Most could identify more than a threat as a factor in why Nero killed her – Britannicus; her power at the start (+ coins), her violent rages (over Acte), objections to Poppaea, the possible plot with Plautus. Occasionally answers did consider she was not that much of a threat really.

Some candidates' evaluation of the sources led to the thesis that they reduced the extent of her threat to make Nero look worse – so they were not reliable since they had an agenda. Candidates were generally good at answering this question, and some candidates even showed a good understanding that by the time of her death she had actually lost a lot of influence and power, and so there must have been another reason to kill her. The weaker responses failed to incorporate source evidence in into their arguments, and just gave a narrative of Agrippina's relationship with Nero.

## A034 Controlled Assessment

Again this year it was pleasing to see a range of topics addressed by students all of whom had clearly enjoyed the opportunity to study a wide variety of material. Most candidates seemed to 'stick to the question', and to realise the importance of answering the question set, rather than just writing more generally on the topic. However, it is still important that candidates address all the issues in the question: for example, when dealing with the importance of religion within Celtic societies some contextual information about the societies and about the role that religion played in these societies will be essential.

One area of difficulty which caused a number of candidates to underperform was a lack of clarity about what is required for source evidence. The paper is called 'Ancient Societies Through the Study of Original Sources', and it is therefore essential that candidates are reminded to return to something from the ancient world on which they can base their argument. A number of students referred at length to modern scholars and their careers/qualifications, but these are not relevant in this context. In general, it would be best for candidates to look for evidence, either archaeological or literary, and analyse this carefully, and draw conclusions from it. Although it is not necessary for them to refer to modern scholarship, this may be helpful in assisting them with the process of evaluation and contextual information. Candidates should be reminded that they should use modern scholarship simply to bolster their own arguments based on their analysis of the ancient source material. The student's primary argument should be based on his or her own analysis of the materials which come directly from the ancient world.

Candidates should also be warned against a piece of work which is merely a list of sources followed by brief annotations. It is important, if they wish to gain a high mark, that they present a clear argument in relation to the issues in the question set. Otherwise, their marks, particularly in AO2, will fall.

The variety of approaches to questions makes it impossible to make topic specific comments. However, in general. This year there were responses on all topics. Egypt and the Hellenistic World proved particularly popular, but the other areas were also covered. The questions themselves appeared to work well for all students, with some thorough, well-evaluated and detailed responses, whilst others produced a general descriptive narrative of the issues involved in the particular area. The result was a full spread of marks, which suggested that all candidates were able to access the questions, and profit from undertaking the relevant research. Again, some centres chose to offer their students a choice of topics, whilst others had clearly decided which area their candidates would offer. In the end both approaches worked equally well.

On an administrative note, we would ask that centres are aware of which option they are entering for. AO34/01 is the repository, which requires that the work is submitted electronically to the repository, whilst AO34/02 is postal moderation, which requires the work to be sent to the moderator by post.

### Comments in Individual Topics

#### Option 1:

Both questions proved equally popular. Some centres interpreted "how useful is the evidence..." as referring to secondary sources rather than focusing on material from the ancient world. In both questions there was a tendency to rely on narrative rather than providing an evaluative response based on material from the ancient world.

**Option 2:**

There were very few responses to this topic. The second question tended to be tackled effectively with good use of original material, usually, of course, pictures.

**Option 3:**

The majority of candidates who took this topic did question 5. There was a real range of responses with some candidates demonstrating a good knowledge of the period and others with rather slim use of evidence. One might expect to see Homer used as evidence to go alongside the archaeology – some centres had clearly prepared candidates well with a study of one or both of the texts, and some had provided a selection of quotes and extracts to be drawn from by the candidates. Some candidates failed to make adequate use of archaeological evidence, which, given the question, was essential for the higher marks.

**Option 4:**

The majority of candidates taking this option did question 8. Many candidates simply described wars that Persia was involved in. Some were able to respond to the question using source material from the ancient world, mainly a combination of Herodotus and some pictures, but there were some well researched responses too which drew on a wide range of literary sources.

**Option 5:**

This proved to be a popular option with large amounts of literary and archaeological material to draw on. Most candidates did the first question on kings, and these tended to be well supported with evidence. The best candidates offered a genuine discussion based on material from the ancient world. Most candidates responded well to the 'reliability' aspect of the question. Some interpretations of the source material in this option were a little far-fetched, but it was good to see that students were engaging with the material first hand, and offering their own, personal responses to what they had studied.

**Option 6:**

This was probably the least popular option with a mixture of responses which tended to demonstrate a lack of background knowledge of the topic. It is important with the study of the Celts that students focus their answers on a particular area, and also consider carefully the reliability of any Greek or Roman sources which they might use.

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